

## The Clipper Visits... Dee Vance

By CHRIS PECK



Dee Vance

Picture this. All of your plans for the month are in a 3x5 index file. All of your mail and school papers hang neatly in folders. Your food shopping is done the first day of every week. And Christmas could fall on Dec. 1 at your house. You would be ready.

Dee Vance says there are people who are born with those skills. She is not one of them. But she learned them out of desperation and she makes a career out of teaching them to others.

In 1979, Vance had just made her 17th move in 2-1/2 years following the career of her husband, Sandy, a former pitcher for the Los Angeles Dodgers.

While waiting with her 2 small children in an hour long gas line in California, she found a talk show on the radio, starring her friend, another baseball player's wife, Cindy Garvey.

Garvey was interviewing Pam Young and Peggy

Jones about their company, Sidetracked Home Executives (SHE). Their goal was to keep women focused on controlling their homes, their time and their lives. And they got a lot of calls that day.

"These women couldn't keep the house neat. They were trying to handle the paper clutter and the kid's artwork. They were trying to get dinner on the table," Vance said.

"These women who were calling in were just like me," she added.

Vance was so intrigued by the message that she got extra gas in a can and drove to San Diego to take the class the professional organizers taught.

"I was late because I was always late then, and they left early. So I only caught 4 hours of an 8 hour class. But it changed my life," Vance said.

She met the women in the elevator after class and soon became one of the California teachers for SHE.

The company recognized 2 other classes of people, the HE, or home executives who were extraordinarily organized and always had been, and the US, those unaware of the situation.

"Those are the women who are just really slob," Vance said. "They don't even realize there is a problem."

Vance said she lectured 5,000 women and most of her students were busy people.

"They are very popular, outgoing people, so much so that they are moving in many different directions and they lose the most important one, the sense of order in the home, the sense of control," she said.

Eventually she started her own company and had a successful career in the San Francisco Bay area that she is trying to transfer to Massachusetts.

Vance and her husband moved to Duxbury last fall with their daughter, Heidi, a 5th grader at DES. They also have 2 boys in college. Sandy Vance changed jobs to work in public relations for the Christian Science Church Center in Boston.

Dee Vance's company, Professional Home, 934-3272, offers her services in the form of lectures to corporations, business groups and smaller women's clubs as well as classes. She is teaching Home Management for Women Who are Home and Home Management for the Professional through Duxbury After Dark.



She has been hired to organize offices at the Longyear Museum in Brookline and MacDonald and Wood Real Estate in Duxbury, saying the same skills work in the home and office.

Some specific hints she offers are:

Paper Clutter – Use a 3x5 file to hold all the papers relating to your calendar, including:

- Clients you have to see.
- Appointments for home or office.
- Invitations.
- Tickets for an upcoming event.

Vance says you should note the information on your calendar and ideally keep no paper. But otherwise, she suggests filing the information on cards behind indexes marked 1 through 31, corresponding to your calendar.

For larger items like the mail, flyers from school, bills or letters you need to answer, she recommends a hanging folder file. That should include a folder for each member of the family, holding vital information on upcoming school events.

"If I can write it on the calendar and throw it away, that's my goal," she said. "But if it has directions to a game it goes into the child's folder."

"This vertical file takes the place of all those horizontal piles you have all over your counter," Vance says.

Junk mail should be thrown out immediately, she adds, recommending that a trash can be placed outside to catch junk mail before it enters the house.

Closets, cupboards and drawers – Learn the 4-box

method for organizing and getting rid of stuff.

• Box 1. Fill with things to give away, sell or recycle.

• Box 2. Throw away.

• Box 3. Put away, as in put back into the home.

• Box 4. Storage, for the sentimental items you want to save but need to move out of the way.

Parting with stuff is difficult for a lot of people. With clothing, Vance suggests, if you didn't wear it last season, put it in a corner. If it doesn't get worn again next season, get rid of it. She happily uses the money earned from turning in old clothes to a consignment shop to buy herself one new thing.

Child motivation – Vance uses the house fairy who leaves a special treat if the child has done 3 things.

- Made the bed.
- Picked up the toys.
- Picked up the clothes.

Vance remembers when her oldest son turned 9 and said he knew his mother was really the house fairy and he didn't intend to do any more work. After that, Vance left her younger son a larger toy as a reward for his work and the older son complained.

"I told him you never know when the house fairy is going to come into money." With that he went back to work and was thanked with a larger toy also.

Menu Planning – Seven days worth of dinners should be planned in advance, or at least a list of ingredients that could make them.

"It takes a little bit of planning. You take a 3x5 card and write down ideas for 7 nights," she said. After this is done for several weeks, she notes, you can rotate the recipes.

The shopping list would also include regular items for breakfast and lunch and a running inventory of things you've run out of. Vance suggests hiding some of the snacks to be brought out later in the week.

Planning a week's worth of meals seems time consuming but is not in the long run.

"It takes about 2 hours from beginning to end but, once you are in the house, you're done," she said.

The other advantage, she adds, is when the meal is planned and the food is in the house, the first person home can start to make it.

Hectic holidays – Like many mothers, Vance confesses there were times she hated Christmas. Her new system requires all the shopping be completed by Dec. 1. That makes November her busy time but she is free to enjoy the holidays.

"I'm not an efficiency expert," Vance explains. "I had to learn this."

"This isn't about a clean floor and a perfect house. This isn't about 'Don't put your feet up on the coffee table,'" she said. "I teach a system of order in the home. Because whether you work outside of the home or not, we are all homemakers."

Her partner, Carol Canty, will actually go into your home and help you clean it out, says Vance.

"She will physically go into your home and do the 4 box method. She will help you decide and physically do the labor."

Vance also offers her own consulting to real estate agents and home sellers who want to get that model home look for their house that is going on the market.

She laughs that some sellers are so satisfied with the results that they choose to stay.

In one of her flyers, Vance announces, "I make house calls and you don't have to clean the house before I get there."